The Effect of String Instruction Method Books on Left Hand Shape of Beginning Violinists and Violists

by

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Abstract

This thesis is designed to research left hand shape in beginning string players. It is the author's hope that this will help provide insight to string teachers regarding specific advantages or disadvantages of two beginning string method books, in order to promote effectiveness in instruction. There has been much pedagogical speculation that starting a student with all fingers of the left hand placed on the instrument will help form better left hand shape initially, verses methods which add fingers one at a time or in a different sequence.

In this case, students from two groups were examined- one group of students who have been learning from the *Essential Elements 2000 Book for Strings*, and another group of students who have been learning from *Orchestra Expressions*. These two method books each utilize their own strategy for left hand development. This research will help to provide both quantitative data to measure left hand shape, as well as qualitative data from students regarding their ability and ease of learning appropriate technique.

Keywords: strings, pedagogy, orchestra, method books, left hand shape, technique, violin

Chapter I

Introduction

Learning to play a string instrument can be both rewarding and challenging for the beginning student. While children are often excited to play, it can be difficult to master correct posture and positions. This is especially true when learning the violin or viola, in which posture is far from that of normal human beings' activities. Arms, wrists, elbows, fingers, shoulders, and necks must be placed with care and taught to maintain certain angles and positions.

This can be a source of frustration for both teacher and student. The student is excited to play immediately, and the instructor certainly wants to capitalize on their enthusiasm. At the same time, the teacher wants to promote solid technique that will serve the student well in the long term, while not discouraging the eager pupil.

It is of key importance that a beginning violin or viola student develops a proper left hand shape during their initial playing experiences. A student must understand and experience correct position from the very beginning, or as Leopold Mozart wisely states, "it is easy enough to acquire the wrong habit, but not so easy to wean ones self from it" (Mozart, 1756, p. 57). Leopold Auer agrees:

> It is impossible to overestimate the importance of the first elementary practical steps in the long process of mastering the violin. For better or for worse, the habits formed in the early period of training directly influence the whole later development of the student. The very start of violin playing-- the apparently simple matter of holding the instrument, for instance, before the bow is brought

> into play at all-- has a wide range of possibilities for good or for evil. (Auer, 1921, p.10)

The left hand influences a multitude of factors in string playing; from intonation to shifting, vibrato to dexterity, agility to accuracy, the left hand must demonstrate certain qualities. These include rounded, curved fingers, placement of finger pads on the string, a straight wrist, a straight line from elbow to knuckles, and a relaxed thumb that is located across the neck approximately from the index finger. Without these necessary ingredients, a student will find it very difficult to progress to a more advanced level of playing and technique. In addition, incorrect left hand shape can lead to discomfort and strain while playing. All of these factors highlight the significance of correct left hand shape in beginning violinists and violists.

This research will help provide insight for string teachers regarding specific advantages or disadvantages of two beginning string method books in order to promote effectiveness in instruction. There has been much speculation that starting a student with all fingers of the left hand placed on the instrument will help form better left hand shape initially, as opposed to methods that add fingers one at a time.

In this case, students from two groups were examined- one group of students who have been learning from the *Essential Elements 2000 Book for Strings*, and another group of students who have been learning from *Orchestra Expressions*. These two method books each utilize a separate strategy for left hand development. This research will help to provide both quantitative data to measure left hand shape, as well as qualitative data from students regarding their ability and ease of learning appropriate technique.

Chapter II

Literature Review

From the earliest days of string playing, musicians have grappled with the technique of the instrument. Much evidence remains in the form of treatises penned by violin virtuosos and pedagogues over the centuries. It is remarkable the level of agreement which is demonstrated in these early texts, and shows the consequential and continual development of violin technique.

Early Violin Treatises and the Left Hand

Francesco Geminiani

One such notable early violin treatise was written by Francesco Geminiani, an Italian composer and violinist. Geminiani studied under both Scarlatti and Corelli, and quickly became a sought-after performer in Europe. He also placed his time and energies in composition and teaching. Geminiani's *The Art of Playing the Violin* was published in London in 1751, and it very much reflects the Italian school of playing at the time (Careri, 1993).

As Geminiani's treatise is examined in terms of violin technique, it is interesting to note his approach to left hand shape. In fact, this strategy is later deemed the "Geminiani grip." He instructs beginning pupils to practice the following:

> Put the first finger on the first or smallest string, the second finger on the second string, the third on the third string, and the fourth on the fourth or largest strings,

> touching each with the tip of the finger, which will bring the elbow in its correct position. (Eddy, 1990, p.172)

In other words, Geminiani asks his students to place all four fingers on the string simultaneously to gain correct left hand shape (Eddy, 1990).

Leopold Mozart

Perhaps one of the most well known surviving violin treatises is that of Leopold Mozart, father of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Although Leopold was not particularly distinguished in the field of composition, he became rather successful in the field of violin pedagogy. He served under the Prince-Archbishop of Salzburg, teaching violin and piano to the choirboys of Salzburg Cathedral. Leopold also instructed both of his children in music. (Solomon, 1995)

Mozart's *Treatise on the Fundamental Principals of Violin Playing* was first published in 1756 in his hometown of Augsburg. The treatise became widely popular in its German version and was later translated into both French and Dutch. (Solomon, 1995)

Mozart spells out his approach very markedly as he attempts to steer his readers in the right direction. He provides detailed instructions to his pupils:

> The 'handle', or rather the neck of the violin, must not be taken into the whole hand like a lump of wood, but held in such a manner between thumb and index finger that it rests on one side on the ball at the base of the index-finger, and on the other side against the upper part of the thumb-joint, but in no way touching the skin which joins the thumb and index-finger together. The thumb must not project too far over the fingerboard, for otherwise it would hinder the player and rob the G string of its tone. The lower part of the hand (namely, where it joins the arm)

> must remain free, and the violin must not lie on it, for in so doing the nerves which connect the arm and fingers would be pressed together and so contracted, and the third and fourth fingers prevented from stretching. (Mozart, 1756, p. 57)

Leopold importantly adds:

> We see daily examples of such clumsy players, who find everything difficult because they restrict themselves by an awkward position of the violin and the bow. In order to avoid this evil, one must take advantage of the following exercise. Place the first finger on the F of the E string, the second on the C of the A string, the third on the G of the D string, and the fourth or little finger on the D of the G string, but in such a fashion that none are lifted, but all four fingers lie simultaneously on the right spot. Then try to lift first the index finger, then the third; soon the second, and then the fourth, and to let them fall again at once, but without moving the other three from their places. (Mozart, 1756, p. 57)

These words, in fact, echo Geminiani's approach to left hand shape. Both pedagogues advocate placing all four fingers down on the strings to help the student form correct left hand shape.

Pierre Baillot

Another significant violin treatise was penned by the French violinist and composer Pierre Baillot, in 1835. Baillot was a student of the great Italian violinist Giovanni Battista Viotti, and became well known as a performing artist across Europe. He went on to teach at the Paris Conservatory and built a name for himself as a pedagogue. Although he had already written a treatise along with his contemporaries

Rudolphe Kreutzer and Pierre Rode entitled *Methode de Violon* in 1803, he chose to write his own method (Stowell, 1992).

L'Art du Violon was published in 1835 in Paris, and exemplifies the strength of the French school of playing in the nineteenth century (Stowell, 1992). Baillot's treatise covers a wide variety of topics and is quite comprehensive. In it, he discusses a range of concepts from how to hold the instrument, to how to practice, to how to play expressively. Baillot recommends the use of the "Geminiani grip" and placing all fingers down on the string to develop correct left hand shape, much as his predecessors did. He also includes illustrations of correct and incorrect left hand positions, with special instructions that this shape must be maintained even when playing an extended fingering. Baillot advocates keeping left hand fingers on the string during rapid passagework as well (Baillot, 1835).

Jacques Mazas

Thus, this approach toward left hand technique was passed down through generations. Jacques Mazas was a star pupil of Baillot in the Paris Conservatory. He later went on to become a noted violinist and conductor, as well as a pedagogue. Although more commonly known for his etudes, Mazas also produced a method book in 1830 featuring these same principles. He describes placing all four fingers on the string, and even goes a step further to describe additional attributes of the left hand. "The violin is to be held between the thumb and that part of the hand a little below the first finger, and that there ought to be space between the neck of the instrument and the hand, that the thumb ought to be straight but not stiff, that the palm must not touch the instrument, and that the elbow should hang vertically under the violin" (Eddy, 1990, p.181).

Leopold Auer

Another key figure in the world of violin pedagogy was Leopold Auer. Auer was a Hungarian violinist and pedagogue, known to have produced famous students such as Jascha Heifetz, Mischa Elman, and Efram Zimbalist (Roth, 1997). He spent a good deal of his life teaching in Russia before traveling to America in 1918 to teach at the Institute of Musical Art (Julliard) in New York, and then at the newly founded Curtis Institute (Swartz, 1983).

Auer's 1921 violin treatise, *Violin Playing as I Teach It*, discusses specifically the left hand and how the instrument should be held. He states that "the left arm should be thrust under the back of the violin so that the fingers will fall perpendicularly under the strings, the fingertips striking them with decided firmness" (Auer, 1921, p. 10). Auer also instructs the pupil to play "without resting the left arm against the front of the body" and to try to "raise your violin as high as possible" (Auer, 1921, p. 11). He then describes an exercise to help students form proper left hand shape:

> To avoid incorrect finger position in the first position (one of the most difficult as far as finger position is concerned), -place the four fingers on the four strings- the first on the F of the E string; the second on the C of the A string; the third on the G of the D string; and the fourth on the D of the G string. Do not raise any fingers until all four are resting on the notes mentioned. (Auer, 1921, p.12)

Clearly, Auer is advocating the "Geminiani grip" in his teachings, passing along knowledge one hundred seventy years old.

Carl Flesch

Another notable Hungarian violinist and pedagogue was Carl Flesch. Well-known for authoring the *Carl Flesch Scale System*, he took pedagogy seriously. Flesch performed and taught throughout Europe before coming to the United States in 1923, where he was invited to head the violin department at the Curtis Institute. He then went on to teach in Berlin, London, Holland, and eventually Switzerland until the end of his career (Swartz, 1983).

Flesch published his treatise, *The Art of Violin Playing*, *Book One*, in Germany in 1923. Although he admits his book to be aimed towards intermediate to advanced players, many of Flesch's concepts can be developed in beginning students to help them become successful (Flesch, 1923).

Flesch begins his treatise with a discussion of how to hold the instrument and of left hand position. He cautions against holding the violin too low or too high, as both will negatively affect tone and ease of playing. Flesch also details how "the position of arm, hand, fingers, and thumb are closely linked and dependent on each other" (Flesch, 1923, p.5). He recommends the thumb to be relaxed and slightly bent, and that the "index finger touches the right side of the neck at the base of the finger so it can move freely from its middle joint" (p. 5). He also goes on to describe the importance of curved fingers in the left hand, and how the fourth finger should "be used in a curved shape" (p.5). Furthermore, Flesch notes that "each finger should fall onto the string with its own natural impetus," as forced motions can create a "disturbing contribution" to the music

(p. 6). Flesch's treatise also includes photographs of correct and incorrect left hand position, bow holds, and hand positions for various exercises (p. 167).

Ivan Galamian

The most recent significant violin treatise was written by Ivan Galamian in 1962. Galamian was a violin performer in Paris, but soon turned to teaching. He taught in the Russian Conservatory in Paris, and then moved to the United States in 1937 to teach at the Curtis Institute and then became head of the violin department at Julliard (Swartz, 1983). Galamian's students included Itzhak Perlman, Pinkas Zuckerman, and Michael Rabin. His teaching assistant, Dorothy DeLay, has also been well known as a pedagogue in her own right (Roth, 1997).

Much of violin instruction today is based on Galamian's treatise, *Principles of Violin Playing*, published in 1962. Galamian's treatise encompasses not only the physical and technical aspects of violin playing, but the mental and psychological facets as well (Galamian, 1962).

Galamian specifically addresses how to hold the instrument, as well as left hand set up and shape in the second chapter of his treatise. He instructs students to hold the scroll of the instrument "higher rather than lower" for ease of playing and tone (Galamian, 1962, p.13). "The elbow… is never rigidly set. Whatever its basic placement, it changes its position beneath the instrument as the fingers move across the strings" (p. 14). Additionally, the wrist "should be held in such a way that there is approximately straight alignment of the hand with the forearm" (p. 14). He instructs students that their left hand should "slightly tough both sides of the violin neck" but "should not clutch it" (p. 15). The fingers should "fall perpendicularly on the tips" and the thumb should not paralyze, but rather gently "approximate the curvature of the neck of the instrument" (p. 18). Galamian also includes photos of correct left hand position and common finger patterns; all photos demonstrate a violinist with all four fingers placed on the string (p. 16).

It is intriguing to examine how Geminiani's left hand shape and technical approach were applied and passed on to students over the years both through oral teaching and published treatises. Although the principle of the "Geminiani grip" has been predominant throughout violin pedagogy, it has been largely overlooked in many string method books published in the twentieth century.

In fact, it seems that violin pedagogy primarily utilized a "whole hand" approach until the advent of heterogeneous instruction. The process of teaching by adding fingers one by one gained popularity as classes began to include multiple students on all string instruments.

Contemporary String Method Books

It is interesting to trace the progression of string method books in the United States continuing over time. In terms of technique, older string method books often followed a similar formula. In setting up a student's left hand, the method typically began with practice on open strings and then added fingers one by one, starting with the index finger.

Applebaum *String Builder*

Method books such as Samuel Applebaum's *String Builder: A String Class Method*, published in 1960, follow this strategy. Students spend five entire pages playing only on their open strings, focusing instead on arm levels for each string, half notes, whole notes, and rests. When fingers are added, students begin by placing the first finger on the D string to play E. Students then add first finger on the A string to play B. Next, the second finger is added on the D and A strings. Students practice using only open strings, first, and second finger before adding third finger on the D and A strings. The same “one, two, three” procedure is applied to the G and E strings. Finally, the fourth finger is added on the third page from the end of the book (Applebaum, 1960).

Although the book contains string diagrams and parts of the instrument, the method is virtually free of illustrations. There are no drawings of how to hold the instrument, shape the left hand, or how to hold the bow. In fact, how to hold the instrument and shape the left hand is entirely left up to the teacher, as no text regarding this is included either. Regardless, the book is very clear and straightforward, beginning with simple concepts and gradually adding new techniques one step at a time (Applebaum, 1960).

Muller-Rusch String Method

In 1961, J. Frederick Muller and Harold W. Rusch co-authored a string method book entitled the *Muller-Rusch String Method*. Initial exercises can be either bowed or plucked, and use stick notation with note names written below. Students spend one page on open strings. The second page asks students to begin adding fingers on the open D string for first finger E and second finger F#. Third finger G is added a page later, followed by adding first, second, and third fingers on the A string. These notes are reviewed briefly through short tunes that instruct students to both sing and play, as words to the songs are included (Muller & Rusch, 1961).

Next, students learn to hold the bow (if they have not done so already), and bowing on open strings along with staff notation is added. First, second, and third fingers on the D and A strings are all practiced extensively through exercises and short tunes. During this section of the book, students are essentially reviewing familiar notes and tunes, but with the use of staff notation (Muller-Rusch, 1961).

Other concepts are explored such as G and E string notes, slurs, and new time signatures. Finally, fourth finger is introduced towards the end of the book on the twenty-sixth of thirty-two pages. The Muller-Rusch book is similar to Applebaum's book in that the method does not teach students how to hold the instrument or shape the left hand, and instead leaves that task up to the instructor. However, the book does include several illustrations of how to hold and move the bow (Muller & Rusch, 1961).

Applebaum *String Method: A Conceptual Approach*

Applebaum published another string method in 1972 entitled Applebaum *String Method: A Conceptual Approach.* True to the title, Applebaum's method this time is more focused on introducing the instrument and positions through rote exercises and games to be led by the teacher. He also includes numerous photographs demonstrating how to hold the instrument and bow correctly, as well as illustrations for the rote games. Many of these rote games deal with the physical motions and positions associated with playing. Is it possible Applebaum was influenced by Galamian's inclusion of the mind and muscle (physical) aspect of his teaching? Once again, students begin by playing open strings but this time by rote rather than with printed notation. This continues for eight pages (Applebaum, 1972).

On the ninth page, entitled "A Happy Day-- We Learn to Use Our Fingers," students place the first finger on the D string. Then, students place the second finger and third fingers on the D string on the tenth page. Several more pages are spent on rote games, including one exercise advocating good left hand shape. This is accomplished by asking the student to play first finger E on the D string and holding first finger down, followed by playing open A while still holding the E (tunneling with the left hand). However, it is only suggested to hold one finger down, not all four fingers. On the eighteenth page, notation is introduced, again following his earlier pattern of adding one, two, and three in that order. The fourth finger is finally utilized on the twenty-seventh page of thirty-nine pages (Applebaum, 1972).

All for Strings

All for Strings, published in 1985, was written by Gerald Anderson and Robert Frost. This method book features offers two options- starting by rote or starting by note (although a teacher could conceivably combine both). The book displays pictures of correct instrument hold and bow hold initially, and then launches into the rote section, in which students are guided by their instructor. The "starting by note" section begins on the fourteenth page of forty-eight pages. Although one portion begins by rote and the other by note, both options follow the same sequence of learning. Students play on open strings for quite a few pages, mastering arm levels, quarter notes, half notes, and rests (Anderson & Frost, 1985).

Four pages later, students add first finger E on the D string and then second finger F#. Students spend three pages practicing only open D, first finger E, and second finger F#. Then, third finger G is added. Several more pages are spent just with first, second, and third finger on the D string before progressing through first, second, and third fingers on the A string. Interestingly, the fourth finger is never actually taught in this book. While the book includes more advanced skills such as slurs, eighth notes, and natural finger patterns, the fourth finger is not included at all (Anderson & Frost, 1985).

Strictly Strings

Jacquelyn Dillon, James Kjelland, and John O'Reilly wrote *Strictly Strings* in 1992. This method book spends several pages initially setting up the correct way to hold the instrument and the bow through text and illustration. However, all early exercises are indicated to be played pizzicato until the fifteenth page, when arco is added (Dillon, Kjelland, & O'Reilly, 1992).

Students begin playing open strings using stick notation with melodic contour and written note names. New notes are added as students walk the fingers up one by one. First finger E is added to the D string, followed by second finger F# and third finger G. Once these three fingers have been mastered on the D string, the first, second and third fingers are added in that order to the A string. When students have become comfortable with left hand notes pizzicato, the bow is added on open strings; the same sequence of walking up the fingers of the left hand is then repeated with the bow. The fourth finger is added on the D string on the twenty-third page of thirty-nine pages, and is subsequently added on the G, A, and E strings (Dillon et al., 1992).

Strictly Strings does expand the scope of curriculum further than its earlier counterparts. The method includes dotted quarter-eighth note rhythm, and even ventures into extended left hand position with the use of Eb and Bb. The book also introduces spiccato bowing, an off-string stroke that could potentially be complicated for beginning students (Dillon et al., 1992).

String Explorer

String Explorer was written by Andrew Dabczynski, Richard Meyer, and Bob Phillips in 2002. A beginning string method book with an adventure theme, *String Explorer* ties exploring and treasure hunting elements into the musical curriculum. Students are guided through the experience of playing by two characters, “Rosalyn Le Bow” and “Arco Dakota.” Students begin by learning how to hold the instrument in banjo position and the left hand is added in guitar position. Then, students learn how to hold the instrument in shoulder position and how to hold the bow (Dabczynski, Meyer, & Phillips, 2002).

Initial exercises involve students playing on open strings both pizzicato and bowed, and reading is in the form of stick notation with note names included. Students then learn the “D Ladder” and walk the first, second, and third fingers up the D string in that order. Students practice D string notes before adding the “A Ladder,” whereupon the first, second, and third fingers are walked up the A string. These A and D string notes are reviewed for six more pages until staff notation is introduced. The fourth finger is included on the twenty-fourth page of forty-eight pages, where it is first utilized for A on the D string. Eventually, the fourth finger is added on the G, A, and E strings (Dabczynski et al., 2002).

String Explorer, much like *Strictly Strings*, includes advanced concepts such as the dotted quarter-eighth note rhythm and extended finger position for Bb’s and G#’s. *String Explorer* is even more adventurous in its inclusion of syncopation, tremolo, improvisation, vibrato, and mixed meter, all in a first year method book (Dabczynski et al., 2002).

While these aforementioned method books all walk the fingers up the string one at a time, from first to second to third finger, some disagree with this process. Dale Kempter, both a public school and university string pedagogue in the 1970s, argues "better left hand position results when the fourth finger is used from the first lesson" (Kempter, 1979). He discusses how violin and viola books omit the fourth finger until much later on in their learning- although playing on open strings may sound better initially, fourth finger usage should not be avoided. In light of these differences, it is recommended that new teachers entering the profession should carefully examine and evaluate various string method books- strengths, weaknesses- before setting foot into a classroom (Boney, 1967).

Left Hand Technique at a Crossroads

Up until the publication of *Orchestra Expressions*, no string method book has started students with all four fingers down on the string. Has *Orchestra Expressions* provided a solution to the age-old problem of helping students form and maintain correct left hand shape? Or has it merely adopted centuries old ideas and attempted to put them to new use in a heterogeneous string class setting? In fact, one has to wonder, if so many pedagogues of the past have advocated starting with all four fingers down, why has this not been applied until now?

Perhaps this approach has been avoided due to complications of implementing this strategy among all not just violins and violas, but among cellos and basses as well.

Even *Orchestra Expressions* has no perfect solution. While violins and violas start with all four fingers down on the D string to match the A on their open A string, basses start in third position with all fingers down. They first learn to play A and G in third position rather than in first like the other instruments. While this might help their left hand shape as well, it can be complicated for beginning students. Cellos start with all four fingers down on G, but still play the open A string while violins, violas and basses play A with fourth finger.

Perfection or Compromise?

So what makes a good method book? Gary Karr, a well-known bass pedagogue, feels that a method book should "present [a student] with no more than one specific skill to grapple with at one time" (Kempter, 1979, p.32). Others add that a method book should follow a logical progression, moving neither too fast or too slow so students are always engaged. Some teachers say the main purpose of a method book is to motivate students to enjoy learning music, regardless of the curriculum used (Kempter, 1979).

Yet, most teachers agree that there is no perfect method book. Bernard Stepner, a mid-twentieth century orchestra supervisor, states "no one method book can be a complete educator, even for a beginner" (Kempter, 1979, p.36). Kempter adds, "any method book is only as good as the teacher using the book, and any person who has attempted to write a beginning unison string method book soon discovers that so many compromises must take place between the instruments that a perfect method book is impossible" (Kempter, 1979, p.36). He also feels that any good teacher will supplement lessons with both individual materials and outside sources (Kempter, 1979).

Today's music teachers are presented with a wide variety of options when choosing a method book for their beginning students. New methods are being published frequently and teachers often wonder if they should continue using the "tried and true" or examine something new.

Two String Methods and Their Approaches Compared

Two of the most commonly used string method books today pursue these two different left hand approaches. *Orchestra Expressions*, 2004 Alfred Publishing, is a fairly new method book that introduces all four fingers down in the left hand across the whole ensemble. Even basses start in third position with all four fingers down. This book aims to develop good left hand shape through the use of all four fingers immediately, matching fourth fingers to open strings in a way that is recognizable to the student's ear (Alexander, Anderson, Brungard, & Dackow, 2004). *Essential Elements* is perhaps one of the most widely used string methods today and its 2000 edition is used across the state of Texas. *Essential Elements* does not start students with all four fingers down (Allen, Gillespie, & Hayes, 2000).

Both method books are textbooks officially adopted by the state of Texas. In fact, only three string orchestra method books are adopted by the state of Texas- *Essential Elements* 2000, *Orchestra Expressions*, and *String Explorer*. *Essential Elements* and *Orchestra Expressions* are used much more widely than *String Explorer* and vary in their left hand approach; and consequently are good methods to study. But, which approach is more effective in creating better left hand shape?

Essential Elements

Essential Elements was originally authored in 1994 by Michael Allen, Robert Gillespie, and Pamela Hayes. It has been consequently revamped for a new edition published by Hal Leonard in 2000. At forty-eight pages in length, *Essential Elements* is designed to instruct students in their first year of playing in a heterogeneous orchestral setting. The book provides a companion CD and DVD for students to play along with at home. Diagrams of rest and playing position are shown initially, as well as a drawing of the left hand placed on the instrument. Various exercises and warm ups for the arms and fingers of both the right and left arm are included to help develop basic skills and positions (Allen, Gillespie, & Hayes, 2000).

As students progress through the book, golden colored accent boxes introduce new terms, notes, and symbols. String diagrams show placement of new notes and the respective finger patterns involved. Supplementary material is included: brief composer biographies, music theory notes, conducting patterns, and cultural music trivia are all incorporated throughout. Quizzes are included in the form of lines of music to be played individually for periodic assessment (Allen et al., 2000).

Essential Elements follows a smooth and logical progression in its learning sequence. Students begin with basic note reading practice and music literacy. Pizzicato playing is utilized to help place the focus on the left hand. This way, students do not need to worry about tone and can instead zero in on reading new notes and maintaining good posture. Then students add fingers in the left hand on the D strings and A strings, forming the notes of the D Major scale. Next, students begin bow preparation through bow exercises such as bowing on rosin before finally placing the bow on the string (Allen et al., 2000).

Bow and left hand fingers are combined, and students progress toward more complicated concepts. These include rhythms such as eighth notes, tied notes, 2/4 and 3/4 time signatures. Bowings become more complicated and incorporate slurs. Different finger patterns are introduced as students begin learning about naturals. Once naturals have been learned, students explore the G Major and C Major scales, along with their G, C, and E string notes. Finally, students progress to staccato and hooked bowings, and learn to play full-length scales and arpeggios in several octaves. The book concludes with various arrangements of student-friendly tunes intended to be played by the whole group, and one slightly more advanced solo piece that incorporates techniques from the end of the book (Allen et al., 2000).

Orchestra Expressions

Orchestra Expressions was published in 2004 by Alfred Publishing; authors include Michael Alexander, Gerald Anderson, Kathleen Brungard, and Sandra Dackow. At fifty-six pages in length, the book is slightly longer than *Essential Elements*, probably due to the substantial amount of supplementary art and larger print. *Orchestra Expressions* is also designed to instruct students in their first year of playing who are participating in a heterogeneous setting. The book also provides a play-along CD for home use, and unlike *Essential Elements*, includes all exercises in the book. *Orchestra Expressions* begins with diagrams of rest and playing position as well, and does show left hand position from both the knuckle side and the thumb side. Warm up exercises for hands and arms are included to help prepare students' posture and position (Alexander, Anderson, Brungard, & Dackow, 2004).

As students continue through the book, colorful boxes and shapes are used to draw students' attention and highlight key notes or new elements being introduced. Blue, red, fuchsia, gold, and green pages mark each unit. *Orchestra Expressions* includes supplementary material as well: composer biographies, music periods, conducting patterns, and music theory facts are shown. The book also features tie-ins to other fine art mediums such as paintings, sculptures, and opera. *Orchestra Expressions* includes "orchestra-at-home" homework lessons to help focus individual practice (Alexander et al., 2004).

As in *Essential Elements*, sequence is also created through straightforward, incremental steps. Students begin with basic note reading skills and music symbols. Then students learn pizzicato technique and practice on the open D and open A strings. Meanwhile, the bow hold is introduced and developed through games and exercises such as air bowing or bowing in a tube. At this point, students place all four fingers on the D string to produce fourth finger A to match their open A string. Once the fingers are placed and the hand has taken shape, students practice to reinforce the fourth finger (Alexander et al., 2004).

To put the two approaches into context, the fourth finger is introduced after about twenty percent of the method. Conversely, in *Essential Elements*, the fourth finger is not introduced until about half way through the method.

Once this has taken place, the bow is added on open strings. Students then remove fingers from the fourth finger down to first finger. A similar process takes place on the E string, as students match fourth finger E to the open E string. Eighth notes and double stops are added, followed by the creation of the D Major scale. Next, students learn about slurs, 3/4 time, staccato, and hooked bowings. F and c natural follow, as do the G and C Major scales along with their respective notes on the G, C, and E strings. *Orchestra Expressions* also concludes with performance arrangements for the whole ensemble (Alexander et al., 2004).

When asked how the concept for *Orchestra Expressions* was developed, Michael Alexander offered the following explanation:

> This is a new approach and differs from both Suzuki and traditional method books in that the fingers are addressed as part of a finger pattern (not built up from the open string, 1, 2, and 3). Finger patterns are at the heart of the book and all four fingers are needed to complete a pattern. We felt that this would eliminate the typical Suzuki little finger that hides under the neck of the instrument and that it would provide a proper left hand shape. As a cellist myself, it seems ridiculous to think that cellos and bassists can play using their little fingers while violinists (whose little finger has much less work to do in pushing the string down) have not traditionally been taught to use it from the start. (M. Alexander, personal communication, March 26, 2012)

Orchestra Expressions took four years to write. Alexander's colleagues were located in different parts of the country, so they met in central locations and communicated via conference call and email. *Orchestra Expressions*' method of starting with all four fingers on the string was also given a trial run before writing the book. Kathy Brungard experimented using this approach with private students for several years. Also, the team ran several tests with actual teachers and classes as they began their programs in the fall. Their approach received positive feedback in its initial stages (M. Alexander, personal communication, March 26, 2012).

Orchestra Expressions has since grown and has been included in many classrooms. *Orchestra Expressions* currently holds approximately thirty percent of the market share. *Essential Elements* currently holds around fifty five percent, while all other methods hold the remaining fifteen percent of the market (M. Alexander, personal communication, March 26, 2012).

Similarities and Differences

As one can see, *Essential Elements* and *Orchestra Expressions* possess both similarities and differences. Both methods are geared toward first year beginning students participating in heterogeneous classes, and both tend to cover comparable scope and sequence. While *Orchestra Expressions* is slightly longer than *Essential Elements*, both methods cover approximately the same amount and substance of material and concepts. Both methods were prepared through a process of collaboration with colleagues, rather than individual effort. *Orchestra Expressions* and *Essential Elements* are also both adopted textbooks by the state of Texas.

Both methods include pictures and diagrams of rest position, playing position, and left hand position. In fact, these two books are very much in agreement in terms of technique and posture displayed. Additional diagrams include string and note names, showing both the location of fingers on each note, as well as the corresponding finger pattern required. *Essential Elements* and *Orchestra Expressions* include CDs for home practice, as well as finger/arm/bow exercises to provide practice suggestions and help guide individual work. Assessment is included in the form of either quiz playing lines or homework assignments to be checked by the teacher.

However, there are several differences to be mentioned, although they do not appear to be overly critical in the learning process. To begin, *Orchestra Expressions* is notably more colorful and pictorial than *Essential Elements*, which can seem austere in comparison. While certainly eye-catching, the color and artwork photos could either be appealing to today's constantly entertained students or could serve as a distraction, or both. Regardless, the substance and meat of the musical content is very similar and the color and picture is more decorative than substantive.

Another difference worth mentioning is *Orchestra Expression's* tendency to introduce advanced bow strokes, such as slurs and hooked bowings, a bit more eagerly than advanced left hand concepts. On the other hand, *Essential Elements* tends to delay advanced bow strokes and instead introduces naturals and includes scales earlier. However, the initial beginnings of the playing process are largely the same and these rearranging of sequences only occur later in the book after a foundation in playing has already occurred. Thus, it seems as though *Orchestra Expression's* strategy for placing all four fingers on the string initially compared with *Essential Elements'* approach is a defining factor when comparing these two methods.

Studies Dealing with the Left Hand

Today's teachers often debate about which method will help produce the best left hand shape. Some side with early arguments about placing all four fingers on the string in beginning stages, while others feel students should walk fingers up the string one by one. They then select methods that fit their convictions. Phyllis Young feels that the use of finger tapes and introducing all four fingers down to young players improves their left hand shape (Young, 1978).

However, some researchers disagree. Louis Bergonzi's 1997 study of finger placement markers and harmonic context seems to indicate that while students placing their fingers on finger tapes help improve intonation, it does not seem to either help or harm left hand shape (Bergonzi, 1997). While there has been much research recently regarding finger tapes and intonation, hardly any research has made the direct connection to left hand shape.

Another interesting point is raised by Camille Jacobs in her 1968 study of kinesthetics in violin playing. Jacobs tracks the connection between playing correct or incorrect notes, and whether or not students used correct technique to achieve this. She points out that teachers must visually observe students' technique rather than rely strictly on aural feedback, as it is possible for a student to play the correct notes but with improper technique (Jacobs, 1968).

Rita and Charles Salzberg conducted a study in 1981 dealing with praise and corrective feedback in the remediation of incorrect left-hand positions of elementary string players. Salzberg and Salzberg found that positive feedback from the instructor was just as effective as negative feedback, and the effects of the positive feedback tended to be more durable (Salzberg & Salzberg, 1981).

Some have even suggested completely alternate approached to teaching beginning violin students. Slayman's 1965 study asked some beginning violinists to start playing pizzicato in regular violin position with the instrument on the shoulder, while other beginning violinists were asked to start playing pizzicato in transverse (i.e. guitar) position. When subjects were tested on a D Major scale, students who initially began to play in transverse position were able to play more quickly and accurately than their counterparts (Slayman, 1965).

In the preceding pages, I have described the basic chronology of a number of important treatises over the centuries. However, this still presents the problem of what is best for students in a heterogeneous class setting. It is the author's hope that the following methodology utilizing practitioner research may help shed light on the subject.

Chapter III

Methodology

This study has been designed as follows: thirty beginning fifth grade violin and viola orchestra students at Western Plateau Elementary studied from the *Essential Elements 2000 for Strings* method book. Thirty beginning fifth grade orchestra students at Windsor Elementary studied from the *Orchestra Expressions* method book. These two schools served as level basis for comparison- both orchestra classes met for the same amount of time each week, were approximately the same class size, and were of similar socio-economic backgrounds. Although both classes were heterogeneous, this study has only examined violin and viola students to better focus the research.

Towards the end of the fall semester, informational notes were sent home with students describing the research project. Parents signed consent forms indicating their approval of their child's participation in the study. Then, students signed assent forms to confirm their participation. Actual data collection began in late December after students had completed their holiday concert.

Left hand shape was evaluated through the use of photography. During class, one student at a time was asked to stand up next to a wall in the classroom, which served as a backdrop. Each student was told to hold their instrument in playing position and place their fingers on the string. Using a HP Photosmart R817 digital camera, a photograph was taken of the student's left hand showing the knuckle side of the hand. Next, the student was asked to turn around (while continuing to hold their instrument in playing position) so that the thumb side photograph could be obtained.

These two angles provided necessary information for the evaluators to thoroughly assess correct left hand shape. Without the front and back angles, the evaluators would be lacking key pieces of information. Only the left hand and arm of the student holding their violin/viola was visible in the pictures. Special care was also taken to position the camera parallel to the instrument, so that left hand details would be clearly visible.

Once all photographs at both schools had been taken, the photos were compiled and assigned codes to identify only the school and number of the student (i.e. WP 1, WP 2). While the students in the photos were known to me, their identities were not known to the other evaluators. Then, the photos were given a score based on five key criteria for good left hand shape as recommended by a university violin professor. The criteria consisted of the following: rounded, curved fingers, placement of finger pads on the string, a straight wrist, a straight line from elbow to knuckles, and a relaxed thumb that is located across the neck approximately from the index finger. Each criterion was worth ten points, for a total possible score of fifty points. A sample rubric is located in Appendix B.

Two other orchestra directors and myself assigned a set of scores to each left hand, in order to check for accuracy. One of the orchestra directors is an accomplished violinist and violist, and has been teaching strings for thirty years. The other orchestra director is a violist and has been teaching strings for seven years. I am primarily a violinist and have been teaching orchestra for four years, and teaching violin privately for nine years. The photos were scored by each evaluator on an individual basis.

The scores were then tabulated and compared through statistical study. An intervallic t test was used to analyze the results, as this experiment tested for significant difference between two independent samples using intervallic data.

In addition to this quantitative research, qualitative methods were also used to enhance understanding of the results. This included a student survey using the Likert scale seeking student feedback on their left hand shape, fingers, and ease/difficulty of learning. These paper surveys were handed out for students to complete following their left hand photographs. These surveys are included in Appendix C and D.

Also, an interview of three key participants from each sample group was conducted. Each student was interviewed one-on-one. The interview began with a few general questions to help the student feel comfortable talking. Then, five specific questions were asked regarding their left hand and learning process. These interview questions are located in Appendix E and F. Student responses were recorded using an Olympus VN-1000 digital voice recorder. The feedback was transcribed and reviewed. Once data was gathered, the results of the study were analyzed and described in detail.

Chapter IV

Results

In examining the data, there was a significant difference in left hand position between beginning violin and viola students studying in *Essential Elements 2000* and *Orchestra Expressions*. Students using the *Orchestra Expressions* method consistently scored higher on left hand shape than their *Essential Elements* counterparts. This would seem to indicate that *Orchestra Expressions*, through its process of placing all four fingers on the string initially, is generally more effective at developing correct left hand shape in beginning violinists and violists. The data were examined as follows:

H_0 = There will be no significant difference in left hand position between beginning violin and viola students studying in *Essential Elements 2000* and *Orchestra Expressions*.

H_1 = There will be a significant difference in left hand position between beginning violin and viola students studying in *Essential Elements 2000* and *Orchestra Expressions*.

$\alpha = .05$ $N = 26$ $k = 2$ df = 23

Statistical test chosen: Two-Sample Independent T Test

Obtained Value: $t = 2.79$

Statistical Decision: Reject the null hypothesis since $p = 0.005203$

Experiment decision: Significant difference was found in left hand shape between beginning violinists and violists studying in *Essential Elements 2000* and *Orchestra Expressions*. A two-sample independent T Test analysis indicates (1, *N* = 26) = 2.79, p = 0.005203.

Computations have been included below for verification.

Table 1.1 T-Test Analysis Results

Data Summary			
	A	B	Total
n	14	11	25
X	451.10000000 00001	455.1	906.2
X^2	15624.209999 999997	19266.17	34890.38
SS	1089.1236	437.4418	2042.4424
mean	32.2214	41.3727	36.248

Mean_a—Mean_b	t	df
-9.1513	-2.79	23

P	One-tailed	0.005203
	Two-tailed	0.010406

For independent samples, these results pertain to the "usual" t-test, which assumes that the two samples have equal variances.

Table 1.2 Left Hand Scores in Detail by Student and Judge

	Judge 1	Judge 2	Judge 3	Average
WP 1	29	26	42	32.3
WP 2	24	25	17	22
WP 3	48	47	48	47.6
WP 4	39	44	39	40.6
WP 5	33	44	44	40.3
WP 6	19	37	34	30
WP 7	29	43	38	36.6
WP 8	25	37	33	31.6
WP 9	27	42	28	32.3
WP 10	30	32	23	28.3
WP 11	12	14	5	10.3
WP 12	23	32	25	26.6
WP 13	32	40	26	32.6
WP 14	38	43	39	40
WIN 1*	NA	NA	NA	NA
WIN 2	46	50	45	47
WIN 3	45	45	39	43
WIN 4	46	50	50	48.6
WIN 5	47	50	41	46
WIN 6	26	26	25	25.6
WIN 7	47	48	45	46.6
WIN 8	46	43	38	42.3
WIN 9	47	44	35	42
WIN 10	47	44	32	41
WIN 11	42	41	31	38
WIN 12	38	41	26	35

*Note- Student WIN 1 was unable to participate in the photo portion of the study, but still participated in the survey portion.

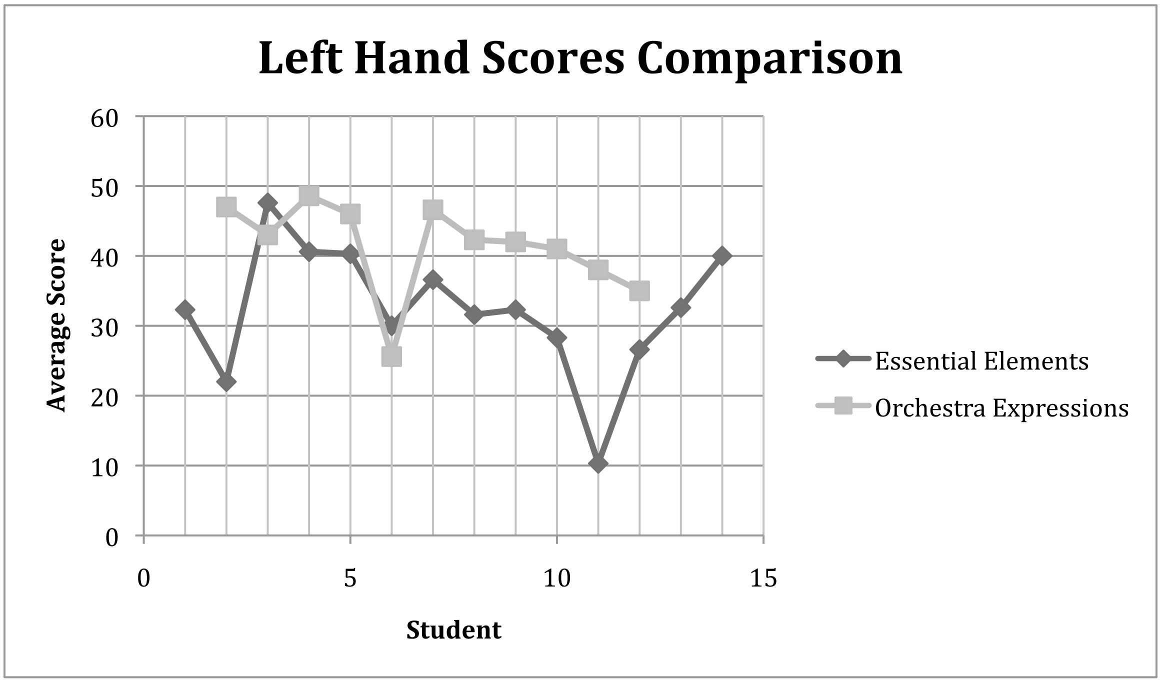

Figure 1.1

Graphic Representation of Left Hand Scores by Method

Chapter V

Discussion

Thus, it seems there is an advantage towards using *Orchestra Expressions* for beginning violinists and violists in terms of left hand shape. Perhaps simply the act of placing all four fingers on the string initially is a way of helping foster correct left hand shape. Indeed, many violin pedagogues, past and present, would argue the benefits of this approach.

Individually and as a group, students studying in *Orchestra Expressions* consistently demonstrated better left hand shape than students studying in *Essential Elements.* By default, it is difficult to collapse one's wrist when all four fingers are down. When more fingers are in the air and not in contact with the string, the wrist and arm have more freedom and range of movement. This can lead to a greater margin for error in arm and wrist shape, as well as finger placement. Photographs included below help illustrate this comparison.

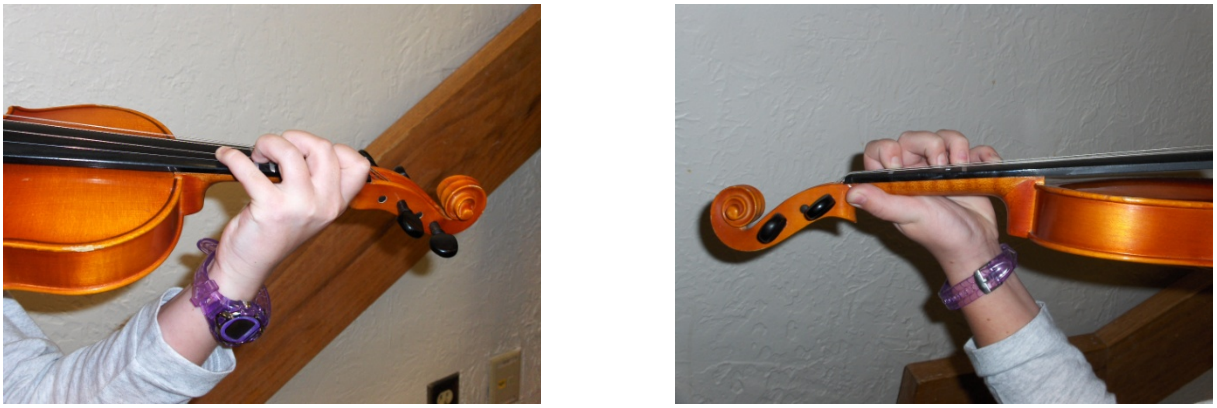

Figure 2.1 Left Hand Photos of a Student Using *Orchestra Expressions*

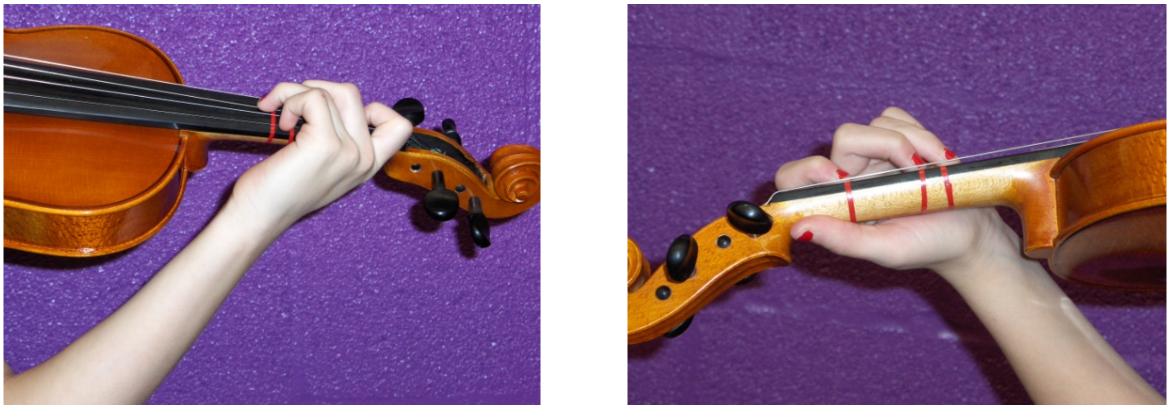

Figure 2.2 Left Hand Photos of a Student Using *Essential Elements*

As one can see, these students are beginners and are still undergoing the developmental process. For example, while both students appear to have rounded and curved fingers from the knuckle side, they both could improve thumb placement as seen from the opposite photograph angle. However, the student using *Essential Elements* does have a noticeable collapsed wrist when examining the thumb side photograph as compared to the *Orchestra Expressions* student.

When students begin to play for the first time, it is important to help these new musicians focus on one task or goal at a time. It is easy to become overwhelmed with how to sit, how to hold the instrument, how to hold the bow, how to read notation, and so on. Isolating and developing mastery of these various tasks can help tremendously. In fact, when so many factors are involved, it is helpful when one of these pieces is removed from the equation. That is what *Orchestra Expressions* accomplishes in essence by placing all four fingers down on the string. Students do not necessarily have to concentrate on keeping their wrist straight, as the fingers seem to create a straight wrist on their own.

Student Perspectives

When considering the issue of left hand shape and the two method books, it is important to examine student thoughts. Students were surveyed and interviewed to glean some feedback on both approaches.

Student surveys were designed in a Likert scale format allowing students to select the degree of ease or difficulty of various left hand actions. Interestingly, no significant differences were found amongst the responses of the two groups surveyed. Both groups seemed to find it “okay” or “easy” to place the fingers down on the strings when they were first learning to play. Additionally, most students reported it “okay” or “easy” to keep the wrist straight and keep fingers rounded and curved. As a whole, most students reported positive attitudes toward their ease of learning and playing in terms of left hand technique. Fortunately, student interviews provided additional depth to the survey results.

Student interviews at both schools yielded some interesting perspectives on the matter. When asked how they remembered to keep their wrist straight and what it was like to shape their left hand, one student using *Essential Elements* said that they “remembered by … it was kind of like a pencil and I kept it as straight as I could, like a pencil, like if it breaks, that’s like your wrist moving.” Another student, using *Orchestra Expressions,* revealed “it felt awkward because I’ve never held a violin before, and it was really weird because you felt like you want to do this [showing wrist collapsed] so it would steady the violin, but you have to do this [showing wrist straight]." Yet another student using *Essential Elements* commented, "I'd have to remind myself every single time!" And a very perceptive student using *Orchestra Expressions* stated, "I remembered to keep my wrist straight, and if you don't, you can't reach" (personal communication, December 19, 2012).

When asked how they kept their fingers rounded and curved, one *Essential Elements* student remarked "it's kinda like, because I used to go to piano, you keep your fingers curved on the piano keys and she said [piano teacher] to do it this way so it helps." Another *Essential Elements* student recalled guitar experiences and said "whenever I took guitar lessons, you put your finger on only one string and you had to keep them curved." A third student using *Orchestra Expressions* related an analogy: "I made up my mind I was carrying something made of glass that was very fragile and if I squeezed it down it would shatter, and also the feeling of glass stuck in my foot and I didn't want that, so I was like 'don't do it!'" (personal communication, December 19, 2012)

Students studying from *Orchestra Expressions* were questioned regarding how their pinky finger felt when they first started to play. One student shared that "it felt horrible at first and I just started to play and it got easier as I played, and it got stronger." Another student expressed discomfort, saying that "every time it started to hurt because I was pressing really hard and I got lines on it." A third student stated matter-of-factly that "well, since my pinky finger's kind of weak, I think everybody's is, it was kind of hurting every time you pressed it down, but then I got the hang of it, and I kind of made it stronger" (personal communication, December 19, 2012).

All of the students were questioned about whether or not the photographs or pictures demonstrating left hand position in their book were helpful. Reactions were mixed. One student using *Essential Elements* said, “not really, because my mom showed me, and then they taught me how to hold it, I learned it gradually and it was pretty easy to hold it.” Another student using *Essential Elements* felt that “it didn’t help me much because I had to actually keep, I mean, someone has to put my hands in that position to learn it.” Still another student, using *Orchestra Expressions*, commented that “well, it kind of helped me, it didn’t like ‘noooow I know how to do it’ but it kind of helped me figure out how to do this” (personal communication, December 19, 2012).

After listening to the interviews, some larger themes seemed to emerge. All students, from both method books, found it difficult to get the correct left hand shape and straighten their wrist at first. But, it seemed that maintaining correct wrist and left hand shape became easier over time. One student was very astute in noticing the fact that one cannot reach the notes if the wrist is collapsed.

Students also seemed to make connections to previous experiences and applied this to their violin and viola technique. Students who played the piano or guitar often referred to this as a factor in helping them remember to use rounded, curved fingers.

Several students even created their own images to help their learning process. One student channeled a pencil, another a glass breaking, and even another student wrote a little song of reminder.

When discussing the left hand pinky finger with students working in *Orchestra Expressions*, many expressed discomfort initially. Fortunately, the students did report improvement over time and with continued practice.

In terms of pictures and photographs, the visual aids were helpful to some but not to others. Does this perhaps relate to the student's learning style? In other words, visual learners might find the pictures helpful, whereas a kinesthetic learner might appreciate having someone help them physically place the left hand on the instrument.

A Teacher's Perspective

It is interesting to gauge student reaction towards both books and methods of approach. As a teacher, it is important to gain the student's perspectives and thoughts on the manner. I, too have gained my own opinions throughout this process of research and discovery. After having used both method books in "real time" with actual students over the course of a school year, I have made various observations as to the pros and cons of each method.

I admire *Orchestra Expressions'* approach towards the left hand and I am excited with the research results regarding left hand shape. The strategy of placing all four fingers on the string initially seems to facilitate better left hand shape. It was also helpful in making students more comfortable and willing to use their fourth finger in actual music. Typically, I have noticed that students are uncomfortable using the fourth finger and are often reluctant to use that fingering; they will gravitate towards open strings instead. I did notice this to be the case with most students studying in *Essential Elements*. On the contrary, students using *Orchestra Expressions* have been much more comfortable using the fourth finger and seem to think it very natural and normal to employ the fourth finger in music. Although asking the students to use fourth finger may present some initial difficulty, it does seem to offer benefits in the long term.

However, there are a few drawbacks that I have noticed in teaching *Orchestra Expressions* to a heterogeneous strings class. While the left hand approach of placing all four fingers down on the string works well for violins and violas, it does not translate so easily to cello and bass. The fourth finger on cello does not match pitch of the next open string as it does for violin and viola. Meanwhile, the basses begin learning in third position and seem to be confused as to when to play in first verses third position. Third position also seemed less concrete in the minds of the bass students than first position, and led to some uncertainty. This discrepancy of fingerings and notes necessitated extra explanation and demonstration on my part, and thus took more time to begin the playing process. (Part of this discomfort could be the result of the researcher being a violinist.) Fortunately, in situations where homogenous groupings are possible, this may not be such a problem.

Several other issues come to mind as well. *Orchestra Expressions*, while spending quite a bit of time developing pentascales, does not introduce full scales until very late in the book. Although students know all of the necessary notes to form the D Major and G Major scales fairly quickly, students do not play these scales until thirty-one pages have passed.

Orchestra Expressions can also be analyzed from a visual standpoint. The book is full of colors, pictures, diagrams, composer biographies, art, boxes, and flow charts; so much to the point that it can be visually overwhelming. While the colors and pictures certainly brighten up the book, it can be distracting as well- too many elements can lead to a lack of focus on the music itself.

Over the course of this research process, I have also developed some opinions about *Essential Elements*. While I have taught from *Essential Elements* for several years, it is interesting to teach the book side by side with *Orchestra Expressions*. Thus, I was able to take a more critical look and see the book through new eyes. Overall, my impression of *Essential Elements* is that it is a good, solid method book. I think the book does an excellent job of repetition and review in its sequencing so that students are always building on prior knowledge. What the students know, they know very well. I think *Essential Elements* spends plenty of time developing basic skills, and I appreciate that it spends time developing left hand concepts before adding more advanced bowing techniques.

The approach that *Essential Elements* takes regarding the left hand has both advantages and disadvantages. The book is easier to use in heterogeneous classrooms because pitches and fingerings are much more in agreement, since the violins and violas do not start with fourth finger. The basses begin playing in first position, and the cello fingerings and notes also line up more easily with the violin and viola notes being introduced.

That being said, the violin and viola students do not receive the technical benefit of beginning with all four fingers down, which can help to foster better left hand shape. Additionally, students studying in *Essential Elements* do not seem as comfortable using the fourth finger in music. The fourth finger is added much later in the book, and can seem uncomfortable or unnatural to students at that point. The students typically express apprehension towards using the fourth finger in their music.

In terms of appearance, *Essential Elements* seems to be very organized and straightforward. However, it looks somewhat austere compared to *Orchestra Expressions*. It would be helpful for *Essential Elements* to include photographs rather than drawings, and even feature photographs from several angles to help visual learners.

Both *Essential Elements* and *Orchestra Expressions* have advantages and disadvantages. In the end, the choice is up to the teacher to decide what they feel will be best for their particular situation and set of students.

Chapter VI

Areas for Future Research

As a result of this study, there are implications for future research. One factor that would be helpful to explore would be to involve a greater number of students and campuses in the study. It would be interesting to see if the same results hold true across a variety of pedagogical and socioeconomic settings. Would the same results, in fact, occur if there were different teachers or school environments involved? Or, might results hold if a participating teacher does not know that left hand shape is the research goal?

Additionally, it would be intriguing to examine the role of time in the process of developing left hand shape. One could select various time frames and assess students early in the school year when the very first, initial experiences with the instrument are taking place. It would also be possible to examine left hand shape multiple times throughout the students' first semester of study. One could even assess left hand shape after a year of playing to obtain a more long-term perspective.

In short, there are many ways in which this research could be expanded. Certainly this initial research has piqued the author's curiosity on the subject and hopefully will be examined further.

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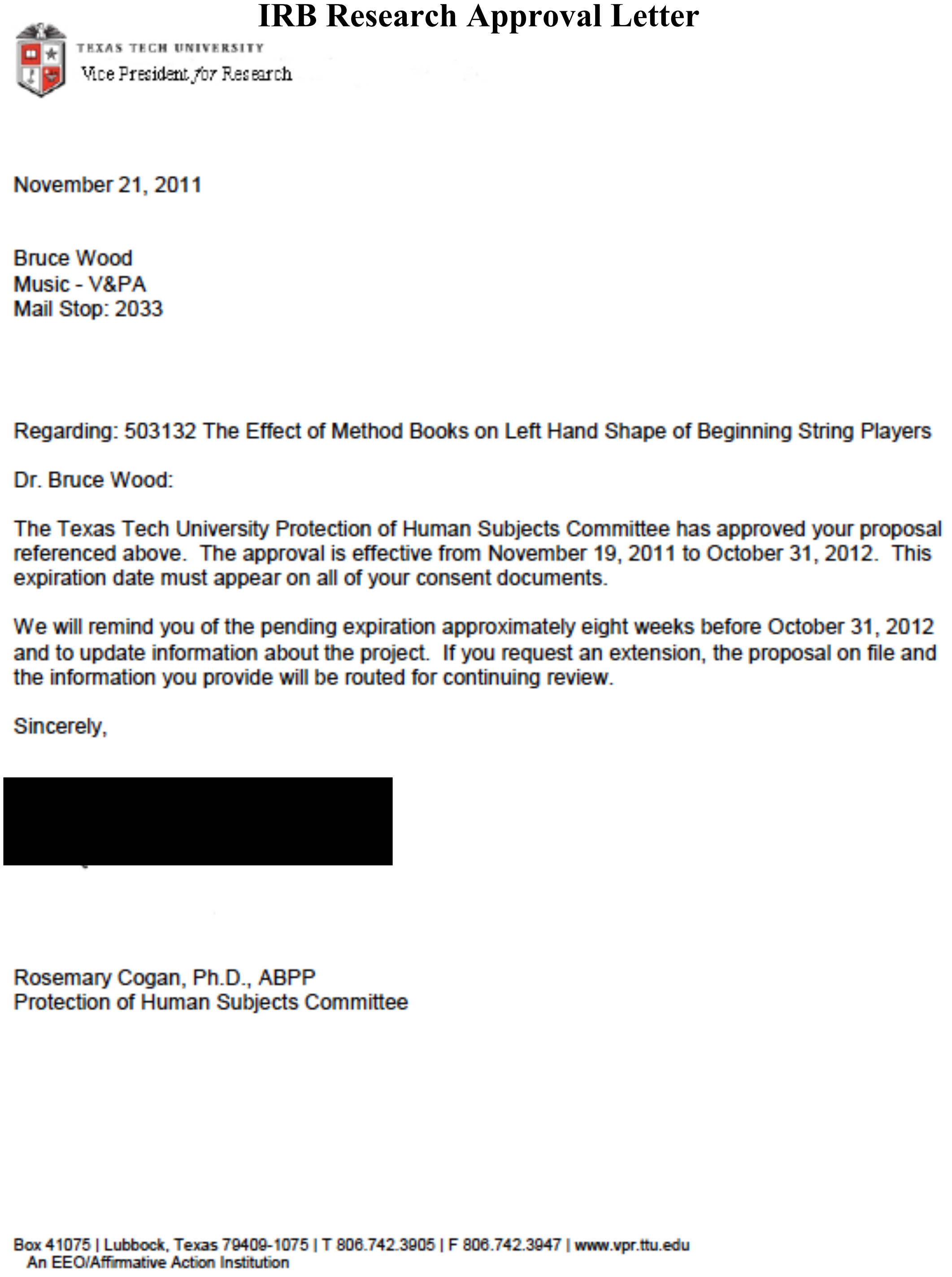
Appendix A

IRB Research Approval Letter



TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY
Vice President for Research

November 21, 2011

Bruce Wood
Music - V&PA
Mail Stop: 2033

Regarding: 503132 The Effect of Method Books on Left Hand Shape of Beginning String Players

Dr. Bruce Wood:

The Texas Tech University Protection of Human Subjects Committee has approved your proposal referenced above. The approval is effective from November 19, 2011 to October 31, 2012. This expiration date must appear on all of your consent documents.

We will remind you of the pending expiration approximately eight weeks before October 31, 2012 and to update information about the project. If you request an extension, the proposal on file and the information you provide will be routed for continuing review.

Sincerely,

[redacted]

Rosemary Cogan, Ph.D., ABPP
Protection of Human Subjects Committee

Box 41075 | Lubbock, Texas 79409-1075 | T 806.742.3905 | F 806.742.3947 | www.vpr.ttu.edu
An EEO/Affirmative Action Institution

Appendix B

Sample Judge Scoring Sheet

Photo	1	2	3	4	5	Total
WP 1						
WP 2						
WP 3						
WP 4						
WP 5						
WP 6						
WP 7						
WP 8						
WP 9						
WP 10						
WP 11						
WP 12						
WP 13						
WP 14						
WIN 1						
WIN 2						
WIN 3						
WIN 4						
WIN 5						
WIN 6						
WIN 7						
WIN 8						
WIN 9						
WIN 10						
WIN 11						
WIN 12						

Category 1- rounded, curved fingers
Category 2- placement of finger pads on the string
Category 3- straight wrist
Category 4- straight line from elbow to knuckles
Category 5- relaxed thumb located across the neck from the first finger

10 points for each category for a maximum score total of 50 points

Appendix C

Likert Questionnaire- Essential Elements

Circle the smiley face that best describes what you think.

1. How hard or how easy was it for you to place your fingers on the D string when you first started to play notes using your fingers?

Very Easy! Easy Okay Hard Very Difficult!

---

2. How hard or how easy was it for you to keep a straight wrist in your left hand as you played?

Very Easy! Easy Okay Hard Very Difficult!

---

3. How hard or how easy was it for you to keep your fingers round and curved?

Very Easy! Easy Okay Hard Very Difficult!

Appendix D
Likert Questionnaire- Orchestra Expressions

Circle the smiley face that best describes what you think.

1. How hard or how easy was it for you to place all four fingers on the D string when you first started to play notes using your fingers?

Very Easy!

Easy

Okay

Hard

Very Difficult!

---

2. How hard or how easy was it for you to keep a straight wrist in your left hand as you played?

Very Easy!

Easy

Okay

Hard

Very Difficult!

---

3. How hard or how easy was it for you to keep your fingers round and curved?

Very Easy!

Easy

Okay

Hard

Very Difficult!

Appendix E

Student Interview Questions- Essential Elements

Interview Questions for Key Participants
(3 Students Studying in the Essential Elements Book)

1. Tell me about how you decided to take violin/viola.
2. Are you liking or not liking the violin or viola? Can you explain why?
3. Do you play the violin/viola for your friends and family outside of school? If so, where do you play and how often?
4. What is your favorite piece of music we've played so far this year? Why is that?
5. When we first started and fit your left hand to the instrument, what was it like for you to get your left hand into the correct shape?
6. How did you keep your fingers round and curved while playing?
7. How does your wrist feel while playing?
8. How did you remember to keep your wrist straight while playing?
9. Did the string and finger diagrams in your book help you- why or why not?

Appendix F

Student Interview Questions- Orchestra Expressions

Interview Questions for Key Participants
(3 Students Studying in the Orchestra Expressions Book)

1. Tell me about how you decided to take violin/viola.
2. Are you liking or not liking the violin or viola? Can you explain why?
3. Do you play the violin/viola for your friends and family outside of school? If so, where do you play and how often?
4. What is your favorite piece of music we've played so far this year? Why is that?
5. When we first started and fit your left hand to the instrument, what was it like for you to get your left hand into the correct shape?
6. How did your pinky finger feel when you first started to play?
7. How did you keep your fingers round and curved while playing?
8. How does your wrist feel while playing?
9. How did you remember to keep your wrist straight while playing?
10. Did the pictures in your book showing left hand position help you- why or why not?

Appendix G
Parent Consent Form

PARENT CONSENT FORM

Thank you for your interest in allowing your student to participate in our research project. This form describes the project and what will be asked of your student. Please read over it carefully and let us know if you have any questions.

What is the purpose of this research?

We are interested in knowing how orchestra method books affect students' left hand shape in their first year of playing a stringed instrument.

What will be asked of my student?

Mrs. Kupresanin will be taking photographs of your student's left hand while they are holding their instrument. These photographs will only show their left hand (no faces or identifying features will be visible) and will be studied for the research project only. The photographs will be destroyed after research is completed. Mrs. Kupresanin will also ask your student to fill out a short survey to find out their opinion of playing and the book we are using this year.

Are there any risks to participating?

We don't expect you to encounter any risks other than those experienced in everyday life.

Will my student's privacy be protected?

Yes! Your student's privacy is very important to us. Your information will be kept in a locked office and only Mrs. Kupresanin or her trained research assistants will have access to this information. We will give your child's photograph a unique ID number and we will use this number in our files, not your name. Your student's name will never by publically shared. We will never publically share the photos we will be taking. In any report we may publish, we won't report individually, only overall statistics for the group. All photographs will be destroyed after the study is complete. Written student surveys will be anonymous.

Is this research voluntary?

Yes! Your student's participation is completely voluntary. You can decide right now that you don't want your student to participate and that is okay. Whether or not your student participates will not affect you or your child in any way.

Are there any benefits of participating?

This research will help provide additional insight to string teachers regarding the advantages of various beginning method books and help promote wider effectiveness in instruction. This will also help provide student opinions on what they like and can better help them learn.

Can I find out the results of this study?

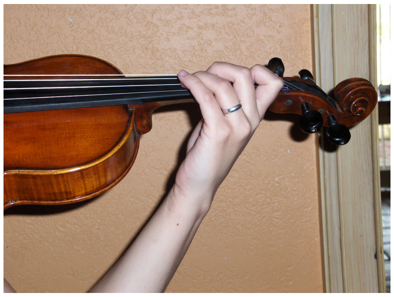
Once we complete the data collection and analysis for the study we will send you an update with our finds. Please note that this may take several months.

Who should I contact if I have more questions?
The researcher conducting this study is Mrs. Kupresanin. She may be reached by email at danielle.kupresanin@amaisd.org or by phone at (806) 326-3126. You may also contact her research advisor, Dr. Bruce Wood, Professor of Music Education, at bruce.wood@ttu.edu. For questions about your child's rights as a subject, contact the Texas Tech University Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, Office of the Vice President for Research, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas 79409. Or, you can call (806) 742-2064.

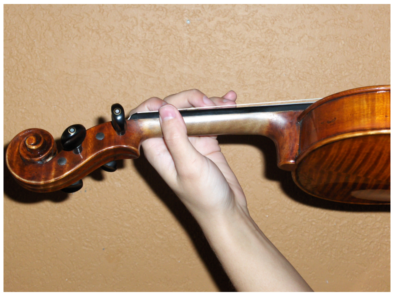
______________________________	______________________________
Printed Parent/Guardian Name	Signature
______________________________	______________________________
Name of Child	Date

This consent form is not valid after October 31, 2012.
(Remember, even if you do say, "Yes," now, you can change your mind later.)

Sample photographs to be used for data collection:



Student 1: knuckle side



Student 1: thumb side

Appendix H

Student Assent Form

STUDENT ASSENT FORM

Mrs. Kupresanin is studying different orchestra method books and how they affect fifth graders' left hand shape in their first year of playing. She will be taking photographs of your left hand while you are holding your instrument. These photographs will only show your left hand (no faces or names) and will be studied for the research project only. The photographs will be destroyed after research is completed. Mrs. Kupresanin will also ask you to fill out a short survey to find out your opinion of playing and the book we are using this year.

If you decide to participate, Mrs. Kupresanin will appreciate your help very much. If you don't participate, that's okay too. You can ask Mrs. Kupresanin questions about the project at any time.

If you would like to help with this research, please write your name on the line below:

Student Name ____

Date _______________________